

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN TEMPLATE

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This template is intended to be used as a guide to help counties incorporate the 2006 federal disaster response criteria as part of local child welfare plans. Minors in the probation system must also be included in the plan. County plans must be amended to include Child Welfare Services (CWS) Disaster Response Plans and be operational by September 28, 2007.

In September 2006, Congress passed the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law (PL) 109-288). PL 109-288 amended Part B of Title IV of the Social Security Act to reauthorize the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program. Among other changes, PL 109-288 established requirements for states on disaster planning in child welfare under Section 6 (a) (16). Accordingly, counties are requested to address the following program areas in developing local disaster readiness plans.

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CWS Disaster Response Criteria A:	Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for children under State care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster:
Essential Function:	1. Identification and location process of children who may be displaced
Process Description:	Identifying information and location of children can be accessed in the automated CWS/CMS system by a variety of County Human Services staff. The County is small enough that Social Workers and Probation Officers have a relatively small number of cases and are familiar with cases, individuals and service providers. The Sierra County staff responsible for eligibility determination and foster care payments can also be contacted to provide information about placement and location of foster care children. When workers are alerted to a disaster in any of the locations where children under our county jurisdiction are placed, they will use all means and

	resources available to ascertain the location of the potentially displaced children. The first contacts will be to Foster Family Agencies and foster family homes, then to the other County Welfare Departments and other responders identified by local Office of Emergency Services as having knowledge of the conditions in the affected area. Appropriate officials will be notified about the presence of foster children and be given contact information for the Social Worker designated to respond.
Essential Function:	2. Communication process with child care providers
Process Description:	Sierra County Department of Social Services does not license foster family homes. The department utilizes the two Foster Family Home Agencies operating in the region for the placement of children and rarely, in the case of special needs or wards, children are placed in group homes. Close working relationships exist between Human Services Social Workers, Probation Officers and the FFA workers. Office, cell and after hours phone numbers and contact information is widely shared and available to Social Workers, Probation Officers and FFA Social Workers. They keep each other informed about the status of children placed in these homes. Both of the Foster Family Home Agencies in this region provide orientation and training and have foster families complete emergency disaster plan documents. Copies are maintained in the foster homes and in the offices of the FFAs and are reviewed and updated periodically.
Essential Function:	3. Identification of evacuation procedures – Event known in advance
Process Description:	In addition to receiving training and orientation and completing the required emergency disaster plan, foster families are instructed to notify the FFA office of any pending or emergency evacuation. The FFA then notifies the County Social Worker or Probation Officer responsible for the children in placement about the status of the children.
Essential Function:	4. Identification of evacuation procedures – Event not known in advance
Process Description:	As soon as feasible foster families notify the FFA office of any emergency evacuation and relocation. The FFA then notifies the County Social Worker responsible for the children in placement about the status of the children. If it is not possible for the families to directly notify the FFA they shall attempt to contact the Sierra County Social Worker and/or any available emergency

	response official in the disaster area who might have access to communications and be able to report the location of the children to a County Worker authorized to receive information and take responsibility in that situation. Any Sierra County Human Services Agency employee functioning as a member of the regular after hours on-call team can be delegated emergency response activities.
Essential Function:	5. Identification of shelters
Process Description:	Shelters within the county are identified by local officials. Depending on the type and extent of emergency they are made available and may be staffed by Red Cross and other volunteers. Typical shelter locations are schools, community halls and senior centers. Sierra County Emergency Preparedness staff have also addressed the issue of public health emergency situations when congregate housing is precluded. County Social Workers and Probation Officers will be informed of these situations and will work with FFAs and emergency officials to arrange adequate housing for children in a disaster.
Essential Function:	6. Parental notification procedures
Process Description:	When the status of the children in placement in the disaster area is known, the designated Social Worker or Probation Officer will attempt to notify the parents of the children and provide the type and amount of information necessary to assure them about the condition of their children. To the extent that safety considerations, case plans and reunification services allow, parents and children will have contact by phone and in person soon after the emergency situation has stabilized or been resolved.
Essential Function:	7. Alternative processes for providing continued services
Process Description:	Depending on the nature of the disaster and the extent of damages to roads, phone and computer lines and electrical services or other essential services the Social Workers will determine what services are necessary to maintain children safely until the disaster and emergency situation is resolved. Cooperative agreements for mutual assistance would allow other counties and responders to assess the conditions and need for services, report to the County Social Workers and provide the approved essential services in lieu of in-person contact by the case carrying worker.
Essential Function:	8. Staff assignment process

Process Description:	Sierra County Social Workers are cross trained in all programs and automated systems. Primary and secondary assignments are made on every case in CWS/CMS to ensure that all Social Workers maintain access to cases for purposes of providing coverage. This process is viable because of the limited number of cases in a small county. Any line Social Worker, Supervisor or Deputy Director has the ability to retrieve automated information about children and families in both of the two office locations 50 miles apart. Additionally, any Sierra County Human Services Agency employee functioning as a member of the regular after hours on-call team can be delegated emergency response activities and given access to the necessary information for children in placement during a disaster.
Essential Function:	9. Workload planning
Process Description:	Cases are staffed with all Social Workers and Supervisor at regular unit meetings. All workers become familiar with all child welfare cases whether or not they are the primary case worker. All Social Workers are part of the on-call crisis response team of professional and clinical workers for Sierra County Human Services. Case workers from the Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs departments are also trained for CPS emergency response. All team members are provided contact information for Foster Family Home Agencies and are trained in risk assessment and maintain a supply of required forms. These workers reside in various parts of the county and some reside in neighboring counties and the State of Nevada. This provides a higher degree of flexibility for disaster response, coverage and the provision of services than would otherwise be available from the limited number of Social Workers directly assigned to Child Protective Services.
Essential Function:	10. Alternative locations for operations
Process Description:	Sierra County Human Services maintains two office locations to serve the two distinct population centers and the smaller communities throughout the rural county. Both offices have access to computers, phones and files. Workers frequently travel between the two offices and are able to access automated systems, voice mail and e-mail and case records in either location. They also utilize support staff to fax or scan and e-mail documents between offices as needed. Some lap top computers are used on a limited basis and the County. The Social Services Department and the County Information Technology Department are working with several statewide automation systems to configure network connections to allow redundancy. For example if power or line problems occur the computer information flow would switch and be rerouted through the other location. This is essential to business in our rural county with severe winter weather conditions and frequent power

	outages.
Essential Function:	11.Orientation and ongoing training
Process Description:	In addition to the cross training of Human Services staff noted in the above sections, Social Services staff members have participated in County wide emergency preparedness meetings with representation from local businesses, service providers, faith based organizations, education, child care, health care, law enforcement, probation, fire districts, utility companies, State and County transportation departments, U.S. Forest Service, and other government entities and designated responders. During the last year Sierra County Human Services staff attended ICS/NIMS and CAHAN training provided locally by the County OES Coordinator and the Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coordinator.
CWS Disaster Response Criteria B:	Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases:
Essential Function:	1. New child welfare investigation process
Process Description:	The County Social Workers are trained in risk assessment and now have access to Structured Decision Making tools. The other Human Services on-call team members also have tools to assess the risk level. They will work closely with law enforcement to respond promptly in disaster situations to protect children and preserve families. Local emergency officials and incident command will be consulted in any disaster situations where the responding worker's safety is a consideration.
Essential Function:	2. Implementation process for providing new services
Process Description:	As indicated above, workers' skills, training, tools and judgment along with communication with officials in charge of the emergency situation will be utilized to determine the level of response and services necessary to provide during a crisis. For example, keeping families together in shelters during an emergency situation may be more beneficial than immediate removal of the children. Counseling services, no harm contracts and other parental agreements to protect the children will be considered to lessen disruption of the family bonds and supports during a disaster. Based on worker assessments, short term services and safety plans will be implemented, pending the cessation of the emergency and the development of a case plan for services.

CWS Disaster Response Criteria C:	Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster:
Essential Function:	1. Communication structure – staff
Process Description:	<p>The Sierra County Health Department is part of the Sierra County Human Services Agency. The Health Department Emergency Preparedness Coordinator has a major role in emergency and disaster preparedness for the County and has developed procedures for the Human Services Agency as a whole to use in the event of a public health emergency. These plans and procedures for continuity of operations are applicable to other emergency situations and are available to the entire Sierra County Human Services Agency. The Health Department plan states, "It is recognized that during emergencies, communications systems are the most likely aspect of any plan to fail. Special attention and preparation must be made to prevent a communications breakdown." Specific arrangements for communications include; The local Health Officer has been provided with a Government Emergency Telecommunications Services (GETS) card to be used only by authorized personnel when they are unable to complete emergency calls through normal or alternate telecommunications means. The California Health Alert Network (CAHAN) will be used to ensure secure electronic exchange of vital information between state and local entities. Sierra County Health and Human Services (SCHHS) received training on CAHAN and is in the process of entering all SCHHS personnel into the notification system, which can relate information quickly and efficiently in the event that the Continuity Of Operations Plan (COOP) is activated. The Sierra County Sheriffs Office dispatch has an on-call schedule with office, home and cellular phone #s for the clinical crisis on-call team members for Mental Health, CPS and APS emergency response. SCHHS telephone lines are equipped with password-protected voice mail. Incoming voice mail messages can be retrieved and outgoing voice mail messages changed remotely from any telephone by dialing 530-993-6701 and entering the respective SCHHS extension number and password at the prompts. During any emergency that activates the COOP Plan, any staff not reporting to work or working at an alternate location should ensure that their outgoing voice mail message provides updated information regarding their availability and contact information.</p>
Essential Function:	2. Communication structure – child welfare personnel (phone tree)
Process Description:	<p>All available phone numbers of SCHHS personnel are listed in a Sierra County Human Services Phone Alert Roster distributed to all employees with instructions provided for use in an emergency situation. All employees are provided laminated wallet cards containing the home phone numbers and cellular numbers of all SCHHS co-workers in addition to the phone tree Alert Roster and the office phone number lists. Office support staff routinely updates the cards and rosters and distribute them to all staff when agency personnel changes occur.</p>

Essential Function:	3. Communication structure – contracted services
Process Description:	SCHHS is vendor dependent on AT&T for telephone systems. However, should the AT&T network fail, Centrex lines can be used for backup as well as analog phone lines and fax transmissions. Some staff members have access to office cellular phones with service provided by Verizon Wireless others use their individual phones through a variety of service providers.
Essential Function:	4. Communication process when all normal channels are unavailable
Process Description:	<p>SCHHS possesses four satellite telephones. These telephones are maintained by the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and loaned out to users when requested by having the requesting agency or individual sign the Satellite Phone Log Sheet. These phones should be available to those agencies or individuals likely to be involved in response to an outside emergency, such as the Emergency Preparedness Office, the Sheriff's Office, emergency personnel, and the Division of Environmental Health.</p> <p>SCHHS currently possesses five Infinity P777 handheld radios. These radios are maintained by the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and assigned to those users within the agency who would likely be involved in response to an outside emergency.</p> <p>Further, the emergency preparedness office has compiled an agency-wide list of employee cellular numbers that can be contacted on a mass basis via text messaging. This can be done remotely via internet access in order to relate relevant information on an as-needed basis.</p>
Essential Function:	5. Communication frequency
Process Description:	When the disaster or emergency situation is declared and the plan is activated by the designated individuals, the Phone Alert will be activated for SCHHS and availability of response personnel will be reported back for assignment to incident command officials. Depending on the nature and duration of the emergency and the risks involved in individual assignments, personnel will be requested to check in at regular intervals or upon the completion of each activity. This will allow the limited resources to be used most efficiently.
Essential Function:	6. Communication with media

Process Description:	To ensure consistent reliable and continuous flow of information to the public and the media, the Human Services Director, or designee, will be designated Public Information Officer (PIO) for the Sierra County Health and Human Services agency. The PIO will be responsible for dealing with media inquiries on behalf of SCHHS and for issuing press releases and news conferences as necessary. All efforts will be coordinated with the State PIO. The Director will approve all press releases, statements, interviews and information from SCHHS. All such communication will be carried out at a level appropriate for the incident and within the framework of the incident command and unified command systems when operating at such level.
Essential Function:	7. Communication with volunteers
Process Description:	<p>Extra Help staff phone numbers are available through agency records and phone lists and Community Resource Directories have been developed in the agency and are available to Human Services staff and community partners.</p> <p>The following information dissemination vehicles developed for use by the Sierra County Health Department may also be used by the Social Services Department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Door-to-door leaflets • U.S. Mail • Broadcast fax via CAHAN • Town Hall meetings • List-serve email • Sierra County website • Media (list contained in the Crisis & Emergency Risk Communications Plan located in the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator's office)
Essential Function:	8. Establishment of a toll-free number prior to disaster (include TTY)
Process Description:	<p>There is currently no toll-free number specific to Human Services. Collect calls are accepted by the SCHHS agency.</p> <p>Sierra County Sheriff's Office has a toll-free recorded information line: 1-888-2-SHERIFF (1-888-274-3743), or their 24/7 Dispatch Line: (530) 289-3700.)</p> <p>Information about an emergency will be provided to the SCHHS staff so answers to all</p>

	<p>questions will be consistent. At least one telephone line will be designated as the outgoing line for required communication with outside authorities. At least one other telephone line will be left as an incoming line for outside local and state authorities. These two numbers will <u>not</u> be made public. Redundant communication systems with designated SCHHS staff and emergency contacts shall be established to ensure timely notification and response. An informational outgoing message will be recorded on (530) 993-6799 specific to the event.</p>
CWS Disaster Response Criteria D:	Preserve essential program records:
Essential Function:	1. Record preservation process
Process Description:	<p>Child Welfare Services records are entered in CWS/CMS automated system and are maintained in the statewide data base. Hard copies are also maintained in the County and copies exist in both offices. Copies of Court orders in Child Protective Services cases are also kept by the Court in a separate location at the County Court House.</p>
Essential Function:	2. Use of off-site back-up system
Process Description:	<p>The CWS/CMS data center is located outside of the county. There are two office locations in the County where records are maintained.</p>
CWS Disaster Response Criteria E:	Coordinate services and share information with other states:
Essential Function:	1. Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children reporting process
Process Description:	<p>There are very few ICPC cases in Sierra County. The contact information for ICPC coordinators for all states can be found in CWS/CMS. The Probation and Social Services Departments are alerted by local school officials or law enforcement when there is any indication that children are being placed from out of state. The workers contact the adult caregivers and attempt to verify custody or other court orders and follow up with the sending state to identify and contact the case managers.</p>

Essential Function:	2. Mental health providers
Process Description:	The Mental Health Department is part of the Sierra County Health and Human Services Agency and the staff participates in regular group meetings, training and case consultations with Social Services staff.
Essential Function:	3. Courts
Process Description:	Sierra County Social Services has a close working relationship with the Courts and will notify the Court of any placement changes necessitated by emergency or disaster. Minute orders can be obtained if necessary to provide for services for children during a disaster. The Department has ready access to contact information for attorneys and court officials.
Essential Function:	4. Federal partners
Process Description:	The Health Department maintains lists of federal contacts for use in disaster situations. Various federal partners have participated in emergency preparedness meetings held in the county. The U.S. Forest Service is a significant presence in the rural county and their managers and personnel are in regular contact with the County Board of Supervisors, Department Managers and Office of Emergency Services.
Essential Function:	5. CDSS
Process Description:	The SCHHS Director has access to the CDSS appointed County liaison and works through the County Welfare Directors' Association to maintain working relationships with the various Divisions and Bureaus. The CDSS web-site contains a directory of contact numbers as well as program regulations, letters and information notices. The Deputy Director for Sierra County Social Services is the county contact for emergency shelter care and would work with local and state partners and volunteer organizations.
Essential Function:	6. Tribes
Process Description:	While there are no tribes in Sierra County, Social Workers and Probation Workers are aware of ICWA requirements and can access forms and tribal information contained in CWS/CMS as well as

	hard copy directories in the Sierra County Human Services Agency. The other Counties in the region and the State of Nevada are alternate resources for tribal information in emergency situations.
Essential Function:	7. Volunteers
Process Description:	In addition to Salvation Army and Red Cross volunteers, there are active groups of faith based and service organizations through out the County. The SCHHS agency maintains a pool of part-time extra help employees who can be utilized to cover phones, transport clients of the agency, supervise visitation, to interpret for non-English speaking populations etc. These employees can provide support to agency staff and program functions during an emergency. Community Resource Directories have been developed in the agency and are available to Human Services staff and community partners.